



Asian-Americans are not one big group

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Michelle Diggles for Third Way: While we tend to speak of "Asian Americans" as a monolithic cultural identity group, they represent 19 different countries. The Asian identity is in fact largely ascribed by outsiders. Fewer than 20 percent of Asian Americans self-identify as "Asian" or "Asian American." Rather, they are much more likely to identify based on their ancestral country of origin or simply call themselves Americans. By considering all Asians to be of one mind, politicians, political parties, and prognosticators mask their diverse experiences, languages, and traditions...

Surveys demonstrate different views on key issues between subgroups and show divergent rates of partisanship. On social issues, Christian Asian Americans display more conservative views. Among Filipino Americans, 89 percent are Christian, including 65 percent who are Catholic. And 70 percent of Korean Americans are Christian, including 61 percent who are Protestant. Half of each group thinks abortion should be illegal in all or most cases —14 points higher than Asian Americans as a whole.

Both of these groups differ from Asian Americans writ large on ideology. One-third of Filipino Americans and Korean Americans describe themselves as ideologically conservative, nine points higher than among all Asian Americans. Given the higher portion of Christians among this group, that is unsurprising. There are partisan differences as well. By 20 points, Vietnamese Americans are less likely to identify as Democrats than Korean Americans.

These widely divergent experiences and backgrounds necessitate a sophisticated and disaggregated outreach approach from political parties and candidates — not simply one-note appeals to some pan-Asian identity.

EASY WAY OUT FOR COAL

Katie Valentine for ThinkProgress: State utility Florida Power and Light (FPL) wants to buy an old coal plant in Florida just to shut it down, a move that it says would prevent nearly 1 million tons of carbon dioxide from entering the atmosphere each year.

FPL filed a petition with the state's Public Service Commission last week to acquire the Cedar Bay Generating Plant in Jacksonville, which went into service in 1994. Upon buying the coal plant, FPL plans to immediately reduce the plant's operations by 90 percent, and then phase it out of service completely over the next two to three years.

The reason it's doing this, FPL has said, is simple: the plant is outdated, and shutting it down will save customers money — \$70 million a year to be exact, according to the utility...

Sarah Gatewood, a spokeswoman for FPL, told ThinkProgress that the utility had never purchased a power plant just to shut it down before. But, she said, FPL will "certainly keep eye out for any opportunity to save customers money," even if it means making a similar move in the future.

PLASTIC PROTECTIONISM

K. William Watson for the Cato Institute: Lego's patent for the "Toy Building Brick" expired in 1988, but the company still aggressively tries to claim monopoly privileges over its products. Ten years ago, Lego tried unsuccessfully to claim trademark protection for blocks with circles on top. Now they are going after competitors for making products that look similar to the new "Lego Friends" line of blocks marketed toward girls. For example, Lego complains that its competitors have infringed its copyright in "Figure with Skirt."

Of immediate interest is the fact that Lego has filed a complaint at the U.S. International Trade Commission seeking to bar importation of certain Mega Bloks, Lite Brix and Best-Lock products...

The Lego case, in particular, raises an important question about the International Trade Commission's proper role in enforcing intellectual property rights. Because it is a protectionist agency, and its intellectual property litigation power was created to protect U.S. industries from "unfair competition," there must be a "domestic industry" to protect before the ITC can act.

The complainant in this case is a Danish company that manufactures its products in Europe and Mexico. The respondents include two U.S. companies and one Canadian company that manufacture their products in China and Canada.

So there's a strong possibility that Lego's ITC complaint will fail due to lack of a domestic industry. That's good news if you're a consumer of children's toys. But it's also an irrational impediment to effective patent enforcement.